

The NATURE of the KINGDOM,
or CHURCH, of CHRIST.

A 1608/1501.

S E R M O N

Preach'd. before the

K I N G,

A T T H E

Royal Chapel at St. James's,
On SUNDAY *March* 31, 1717.

By the Right Reverend FATHER in GOD
BENJAMIN Lord Bishop of BANGOR.

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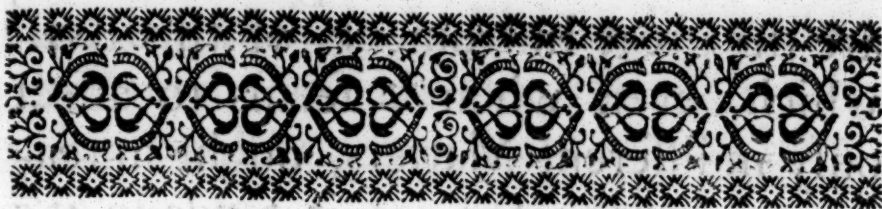
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L O N D O N,

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St. JOHN, xviii. 36.

*Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not
of this World.*



NE of those great Effects,
which length of Time is
seen to bring along with
it, is the Alteration of the
Meaning annexed to certain Sounds.
The Signification of a Word, well
known and understood by Those who
first made use of it, is very insensibly
varied, by passing thrô many Mouths,
and by being taken and given by Mul-
titudes, in common Discourse; till it of-
ten comes to stand for a Complication
of Notions, as distant from the origi-
nal Intention of it, nay, as contradicto-
ry to it, as Darkness is to Light. The
Ignorance and Weakness of Some, and
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the Passions and Bad Designs of Others, are the great Instruments of this Evil: which, even when it seems to affect only indifferent Matters, ought in reason to be opposed, as it tends in it's nature to confound Men's Notions in weightier Points; but, when it hath once invaded the most Sacred and Important Subjects, ought, in Duty, to be resisted with a more open and undisguised Zeal, as what toucheth the very Vitals of all that is good, and is just going to take from Men's Eyes the Boundaries of Right and Wrong.

The only Cure for this *Evil*, in Cases of so great Concern, is to have recourse to the Originals of Things: to the Law of Reason, in those Points which can be traced back thither; and to the Declarations of *Jesus Christ*, and his immediate Followers, in such Matters, as took their Rise solely from those Declarations. For the Case is plainly this, that Words and Sounds have had such an Effect, (not upon the Nature of Things, which is unmoveable, but) upon the Minds of Men in thinking



thinking of them; that the very same Word remaining, (which at first truly represented One certain Thing,) by having Multitudes of new inconsistent Ideas; in every Age, and every Year, added to it, becomes it self the greatest Hindrance to the true understanding of the Nature of the Thing first intended by it.

For Instance, *Religion*, in St. James's Days, was Virtue and Integrity, as to our selves, and Charity and Beneficence to others; before *God*, even the *Father*. *Ja. i. 27.* By Degrees, it is come to signify, in most of the Countries throughout the whole World, the Performance of every thing almost, except Virtue and Charity; and particularly, a punctual Exactness in a Regard to particular *Times, Places, Forms, and Modes*, diversified according to the various Humours of Men; recommended and practised under the avowed Name of *External Religion: Two Words*, which, in the Sense fix'd upon them by many Christians, *God hath put asunder*; and which therefore, *no Man should join together.*

gether. And accordingly, the Notion of a *Religious Man* differs in every Country, just as much as *Times, Places, Ceremonies, Imaginary Austerities*, and all other *Outward Circumstances*, are different and various: Whereas in truth, tho' a Man, truly *Religious* in other Respects, may make use of such Things; yet, they cannot be the least part of his *Religion*, properly so call'd, any more than his Food, or his Raiment, or any other Circumstance of his Life.

Thus likewise, the *Worship of God*, to be paid by Christians, was, in *our Saviour's* time, and in his own plain Words, the *Worship of the Father in Spirit and Truth*; and this declared to be one great End propos'd in the *Christian Dispensation*: *The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshipers shall Worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* John iv. 23. But the *Notion* of it is become quite another thing: and in many *Christian Countries*, that which still retains the Name of the *Worship of God*, is indeed the Neglect,

lest, and the Diminution of the Father; and the Worship of other Beings besides, and more than, the *Father*. And this, performed in such a manner, as that any *indifferent Spectator* would conclude, that neither the Consciences nor Understandings of Men, neither *Spirit* nor *Truth*, were at all concerned in the Matter; or rather, that they had been banish'd from it by an expresse Command. In the mean time the *Word*, or *Sound*, still remains the same in Discourse. The whole Lump of indigested, and inconsistent Notions and Practices; Every thing that is solemnly said, or done, when the *Worship* of *God* is profess'd, is equally cover'd under that *general Name*; and, by the help of using the same *Original Word*, passeth easily for the *Thing* it self. Again,

Prayer, in all our *Lord's* Directions about it, and particularly in that *Form*, which He himself taught his Followers, was a calm, undisturbed, *Address* to *God*, under the Notion of a *Father*, expressing those Sentiments and Wishes
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before Him, which every sincere Mind ought to have. But the same *Word*, by the help of Men, and voluminous Rules of Art, is come to signify *Heat* and *Flame*, in such a manner, and to such a degree, that a Man may be in the *best Disposition* in the World, and yet not be *devout* enough to *Pray*: and many an honest Person hath been perplex'd, by this Means, with Doubts and Fears of being incapable of *Praying*, for want of an *intenseness* of *Heat*, which hath no more relation to the Duty, than a Man's being in a *Fever* hath, to the Sincerity of his Professions, or Addresses to any *Earthly Prince*.

Once more, the *Love of God*, and of *our Saviour*, was at first, in his own Words, and those of *St. John*, many times repeated, the *keeping his Commandments*, or *doing his Will*. Joh. 14. 15, 21, 23. ch. 15. 10. I Joh. 2. 5. ch. 5. 3. II Joh. 6. But the *Notion* of it was, it seems, left very jejune; and so hath been improved by his *later Followers*, till the same *Name*, still kept up in the Language of *Christians*, is far removed from
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the *Thing* principally and first intended ; and is come by degrees to signify a violent *Passion*, *Commotion*, and *Ecstasy*, venting it self in such sort of Expressions and Disorders, as other *Passions* do: and this regulated and defined, by such a Variety of Imaginations, that an ordinary *Christian*, with the utmost Sincerity in his Heart, is filled with nothing but eternal Suspitions, Doubts, and Perplexities, whether he hath any thing of the true *Love of God*, or not.

I have mentioned these *Particulars*, not only to shew the Evil it self ; and to how great a Degree the *Nature* of Things hath suffered in the Opinions of Men, by the Alteration of the Sense of the same *Words* and *Sounds* : but to give you Occasion to observe, that there can be no Cure for it, in *Christians*, but to go back to the *New Testament* it self ; because *there* alone we shall find the Original Intention of such Words ; or the Nature of the Things design'd to be signified by them, declared and fixed by our *Lord*, or his *Apostles* from him, by

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some such Marks, as may, if we will attend to them, guide and guard us in our Notions of those Matters, in which we are most of all concern'd.

It is with this View, that I have chosen those *Words*, in which our Lord himself declared the Nature of *his own Kingdom*. This *Kingdom of Christ*, is the same with the *Church of Christ*. And the *Notion* of the *Church of Christ*, which, at first, was only the Number, small or great, of Those who believed *Him* to be the *Messiah*; or of Those who subjected themselves to *Him*, as their *King*, in the *Affair of Religion*; having since that Time been so diversified by the various *Alterations* it hath undergone, that it is almost impossible so much as to number up the many *inconsistent Images* that have come, by daily *Additions*, to be united together in it: nothing, I think, can be more useful, than to consider the same thing, under some other *Image*, which hath not been so much used; nor consequently so much defaced. And since the *Image* of *His Kingdom*, is
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That, under which our Lord himself chose to represent it : We may be sure that, if we sincerely examine our Notion of his Church, by what He saith of his Kingdom, that it is not of this World, we shall exclude out of it, every thing that he would have excluded ; and then, what remains will be true, pure, and uncorrupted. And what I have to say, in order to this, will be comprehended under Two General Heads.

I. As the *Church of Christ* is the *Kingdom of Christ*, He himself is King : and in this it is implied, that He is himself the sole *Law-giver* to his *Subjects*, and himself the sole *Judge* of their *Behaviour*, in the *Affairs of Conscience* and *Eternal Salvation*. And in this Sense therefore, *His Kingdom is not of this World*; that He hath, in those Points, left behind Him, no visible, humane *Authority*; no *Vicegerents*, who can be said properly to supply his Place ; no *Interpreters*, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend ; no *Judges* over the *Consciences* or *Religion* of his Peo-

ple. For if this were so, that any such absolute *Vicegerent Authority*, either for the making *new Laws*, or interpreting *Old Ones*, or *judging* his *Subjects*, in *Religious* Matters, were lodged in any Men upon Earth; the Consequence would be, that what still retains the Name of the *Church of Christ*, would not be the *Kingdom of Christ*, but the *Kingdom* of those Men, vested with such *Authority*. For, whoever hath such an *Authority* of making *Laws*, is so far a *King*: and whoever can add new *Laws* to those of *Christ*, equally obligatory, is as truly a *King*, as *Christ* himself is: Nay, whoever hath an *absolute Authority* to *interpret* any written, or spoken *Laws*; it is *He*, who is truly the *Law-giver*, to all *Intents* and *Purposes*; and not the Person who first wrote, or spoke them.

In humane Society, the *Interpretation* of *Laws* may, of necessity, be lodged, in some Cases, in the Hands of Those who were not originally the *Legislators*. But this is not *absolute*; nor of bad
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Consequence to *Society*: because the *Legislators* can resume the *Interpretation* into their own Hands, as they are Witnesses to what passes in the World ; and as They can, and will, sensibly interpose in all those Cases, in which their Interposition becomes necessary. And therefore, They are still properly the *Legislators*. But it is otherwise in *Religion*, or the *Kingdom of Christ*. He himself never interposeth, since his first Promulgation of his *Lam*, either to convey *Infallibility* to Such as pretend to handle it over again; or to assert the true *Interpretation* of it, amidst the various and contradictory Opinions of Men about it. If *He* did certainly thus interpose, He himself would still be the *Legislator*. But, as *He* doth not; if such an absolute *Authority* be once lodged with Men, under the Notion of *Interpreters*, *They* then become the *Legislators*, and not *Christ* ; and *They* rule in their own *Kingdom*, and not in *His*.

It is the same thing, as to Rewards and Punishments, to carry forward the
great

great End of his *Kingdom*. If any Men upon Earth have a *Right* to add to the *Sanctions* of his *Laws*; that is, to increase the Number, or alter the Nature, of the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of his Subjects, in Matters of Conscience, or Salvation: They are so far *Kings* in his stead; and Reign in *their own Kingdom*, and not in *His*. So it is, whenever They erect *Tribunals*, and exercise a *Judgment* over the Consciences of Men; and assume to Themselves the Determination of such Points, as cannot be determined, but by *One* who knows the Hearts; or, when They make any of their own Declarations, or Decisions, to concern and affect the State of Christ's Subjects, with regard to the Favour of God: this is so far, the taking *Christ's Kingdom* out of *His* Hands, and placing it in their own.

Nor is this matter at all made better by their declaring Themselves to be *Vicegerents*, or *Law makers*, or *Judges*, under *Christ*, in order to carry on the Ends of his Kingdom. For it comes to this at last, since

since it doth not seem fit to Christ himself to interpose so as to prevent or remedy all their mistakes and contradictions, that, if They have this power of interpreting, or adding, Laws, and judging Men, in such a sense, that *Christians* shall be indispensably and absolutely obliged to obey those *Laws*, and to submit to those *Decisions*; I say, if They have this power lodged with them, then the *Kingdom*, in which they rule, is not the Kingdom of *Christ*, but of *Themselves*; He doth not rule in it, but *They*: And, whether They happen to agree with him, or to differ from Him, as long as they are the *Law-givers*, and *Judges*, without any Interposition from *Christ*, either to guide or correct their *Decisions*, *They* are *Kings* of this *Kingdom*, and not *Christ Jesus*.

If therefore, the *Church of Christ* be the *Kingdom of Christ*; it is essential to it, that *Christ* himself be the Sole *Law-giver*, and Sole *Judge* of his Subjects, in all points relating to the favour or displeasure

pleasure of *Almighty God*; and that All His *Subjects*, in what Station soever they may be, are equally *Subjects* to Him; and that No One of them, any more than Another, hath *Authority*, either to make *New Laws* for *Christ's* Subjects; or to impose a sense upon the *Old Ones*, which is the same thing; or to *Judge*, Censure, or Punish, the Servants of *Another Master*, in matters relating purely to *Conscience*, or *Salvation*. If any Person hath any other Notion, either thro' a long Use of Words with Inconsistent Meanings, or thro' a negligence of Thought; let him but ask himself, whether the *Church of Christ* be the Kingdom of *Christ*, or not: And, if it be, whether this Notion of it doth not absolutely exclude all other *Legislators* and *Judges*, in matters relating to *Conscience*, or the favour of *God*; or, whether it can be *His* Kingdom, if any Mortal Men have such a Power of *Legislation* and *Judgment* in it. This *Enquiry* will bring Us back to the first, which is the only True, Account of the *Church of Christ*, or
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the *Kingdom of Christ*, in the mouth of a Christian: That it is the Number of Men, whether Small or Great, whether Dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are Subjects to *Jesus Christ* alone, as their *Law-giver* and *Judge*, in matters relating to the Favour of God, and their *Eternal Salvation*.

II. The next principal point is, that, if the *Church* be the *Kingdom of Christ*; and this *Kingdom be not of this World*: this must appear from the Nature and End of the *Laws* of Christ; and of those Rewards and Punishments, which are the *Sanctions* of his *Laws*. Now his *Laws* are Declarations, relating to the Favour of God in another State after this. They are Declarations of those Conditions to be perform'd, in this World, on our part, without which God will not make us Happy in that to come. And they are almost All general Appeals to the *Will* of that God; to his *Nature*, known by the Common Reason of Mankind; and to the imitation of that *Nature*, which must be our *Perfection*. The Keeping his Com-

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mandments

mandments is declared the *Way* to Life; and the *doing his Will*, the Entrance into the *Kingdom of Heaven*. The being *Subjects to Christ*, is to this very End, that We may the better and more effectually perform the *Will of God*. The *Laws* of this *Kingdom*, therefore, as *Christ* left them, have nothing of *this World* in their view; no Tendency, either to the Exaltation of *Some*, in worldly pomp and dignity; or to their absolute Dominion over the Faith and Religious conduct of *Others* of his Subjects; or to the erecting of any sort of *Temporal Kingdom*, under the Covert and Name of a *Spiritual* one.

The *Sanctions* of *Christ's Law* are *Rewards* and *Punishments*. But of what sort? Not the Rewards of this World; not the Offices, or Glories, of this State; not the pains of *Prisons*, *Banishments*, *Fines*, or any lesser and more *Moderate Penalties*; nay, not the much lesser *Negative Discouragements* that belong to *Humane Society*. He was far from thinking that *These* could be the Instruments of such a *Perswasion*, as He thought acceptable to God. But, as the Great End of
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his *Kingdom*, was to guide Men to Happiness, after the short Images of it were over here below; so, He took his *Motives* from that place, where His *Kingdom* first began, and where it was at last to end; from those *Rewards* and *Punishments* in a future State, which had no relation to this World: And, to shew that his *Kingdom* was not of this World, all the *Sanctions* which He thought fit to give to His *Laws*, were not of this World at all.

St. *Paul* understood this so well, that He gives an Account of His own Conduct, and that of Others in the same Station, in these words, *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perswade men*: whereas, in too many *Christian Countries*, since his days, if Some, who profess to succeed Him, were to give an Account of their own Conduct, it must be in a quite contrary strain; *Knowing the terrors of this World, and having them in our power, We do, not perswade men, but force their outward Profession against their inward Perswasion.*

Now, wherever this is practis'd, whether

ther in a great degree, or a small, in *that* place there is so far a Change, from a *Kingdom* which is *not of this world*, to a *Kingdom* which is *of this world*. As soon as ever you hear of any of the *Engines* of *this world*, whether of the greater, or the lesser sort, you must immediately think that then, and so far, the *Kingdom of this world* takes place. For, if the very *Essence* of *God's* worship be *Spirit* and *Truth*; If *Religion* be *Virtue* and *Charity*, under the *Belief* of a *Supreme Governour* and *Judge*; if *True Real Faith* cannot be the effect of *Force*; and, if there can be no *Reward* where there is no *Willing Choice*: then, in all, or any of these Cases, to apply *Force* or *Flattery*, *Worldly* pleasure or pain; is to act contrary to the *Interests* of *True Religion*, as it is plainly opposite to the *Maxims* upon which *Christ* founded his *Kingdom*; who chose the *Motives* which are *not of this world*, to support a *Kingdom* which is *not of this world*. And indeed, it is too visible to be hid, that wherever the *Rewards* and *Punishments* are changed, from future to present, from the *World* to
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come, to the World now in possession; there, the *Kingdom* founded by our *Saviour* is, in the Nature of it, so far changed, that it is become, in such a degree, what He professed, *His Kingdom was not*: that is, *of this world*; of the same sort with other Common *Earthly Kingdoms*, in which the *Rewards* are, *Worldly Honours*, *Posts*, *Offices*, *Pomp*, *Attendance*, *Dominion*; and the *Punishments* are, *Prisons*, *Fines*, *Banishments*, *Gallies* and *Racks*; or something *Less*, of the same sort.

If *these* can be the true supports of a *Kingdom* which is *not of this World*; then *Sincerity*, and *Hypocrisy*; *Religion*, and *No Religion*; *Force*, and *Perswasion*; *A Willing Choice*, and a *Terrified Heart*; are become the same things: *Truth* and *Falshood* stand in need of the same methods, to propagate and support them; and our *Saviour* himself was little acquainted with the *Right* way of increasing the Number of such *Subjects*, as He wished for. If He had but at first enlighten'd the *Powers* of *this World*, as He did *St. Paul*; and employed the *Sword* which

which They bore, and the *Favours* They had in their hands, to bring *Subjects* into his *Kingdom*; this had been an Expedious and an effectual way, according to the Conduct of some of his professed Followers, to have had a Glorious and Extensive *Kingdom*, or *Church*. But this was not his Design; unless it could be compassed in quite a different way.

And therefore, when You see *Our Lord*, in *his* methods, so far removed from Those of Many of his Disciples; when You read Nothing, in his Doctrine about his own *Kingdom*, of taking in the Concerns of this World, and mixing them with those of Eternity; no Commands that the Frowns and Discouragements of this present State should in any Case attend upon Conscience and Religion; No Rules against the Enquiry of All His Subjects into his *Original Message* from Heaven; no Orders for the kind and charitable force of *Penalties*, or *Capital Punishments*, to make Men think and chuse aright; no Calling upon the *secular Arm*, whenever the *Magistrate* should become *Christian*, to inforce his Doctrines, or
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to back his *Spiritual Authority*; but, on the contrary, as plain a Declaration as a few Words can make, that *His Kingdom is not of this World*: I say, when You see this, from the whole Tenor of the *Gospel*, so vastly opposite to Many who take his Name into their Mouths, the Question with you ought to be, Whether He did not know the Nature of his own *Kingdom*, or *Church*, better than Any since his Time? whether you can suppose, He left any such matters to be decided against *Himself*, and his own Express professions; and, whether if an *Angel from Heaven* should give you any Account of his *Kingdom*, contrary to what He himself hath done, it can be of any Weight, or Authority, with Christians.

I have now made some such observations, drawn from the *Church* being the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, and not of any Men in that *Kingdom*; from the Nature of his *Laws*, and from those *Rewards* and *Punishments*, which are the Sanctions of those *Laws*; as lead us naturally into the true *Notion* of the *Church*, or *Kingdom*, of
Christ,

Christ, by excluding out of it every thing inconsistent with *His* being *King*, *Law-giver* and *Judge*; as well as with the Nature of *His Laws*, and of *His* promises and Threatnings. I will only make *Two* or *Three* Observations, grounded upon this: And so conclude. And

1. From what hath been said it is very plain, in general, that the Grosest Mistakes in Judgment, about the Nature of *Christ's Kingdom*, or *Church*, have arisen from hence, that Men have argued from Other visible *Societies*, and Other Visible *Kingdoms of this World*, to what ought to be Visible, and Sensible, in *His Kingdom*: Constantly leaving out of their *Notion*, the most Essential Part of it, that *Christ* is *King* in his own *Kingdom*; forgetting this *King* himself, because He is not now seen by mortal Eyes; and Substituting *Others* in his Place, as *Law-givers* and *Judges*, in the same Points, in which He must either *Alone*, or not at all, be *Law-giver* and *Judge*; not contented with such a *Kingdom* as He established, and desires to reign in; but urging

ging and contending, that *His Kingdom* must be like *Other Kingdoms*. Whereas He hath positively warn'd them against any such Arguings, by assuring Them that this *Kingdom* is *His Kingdom*, and that it is *not of this World*; and therefore that No one of *His Subjects* is *Law-giver* and *Judge* over Others of them, in matters relating to *Salvation*, but He alone; and that We must not Frame our Ideas from the *Kingdoms of this World*, of what ought to be, in a visible and sensible manner, in *His Kingdom*.

2. From what hath been said it appears that the *Kingdom of Christ*, which is the *Church of Christ*, is the Number of Persons who are Sincerely, and Willingly, *Subjects to Him*, as *Law-giver* and *Judge*, in all matters truly relating to Conscience, or Eternal Salvation. And the more close and immediate this Regard to *Him* is, the more certainly and the more evidently true it is, that They are of his *Kingdom*. This may appear fully to their own Satisfaction, if They have recourse to *Him* himself, in the Gospel;

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if They think it a sufficient Authority that He hath declared the *Conditions* of their *Salvation*, and that No Man upon Earth hath any Authority to declare any other, or to add one tittle to them; if They resolve to perform what They see, He laith a stress upon; and if They trust no mortal, with the absolute direction of their *Consciences*, the pardon of their Sins, or the determining of their Interest in God's favour; but wait for their *Judge*, who alone can bring to light *the hidden things of darkness*.

If They feel themselves disposed and resolved to receive the Words of *Eternal Life* from *Himself*; to take their *Faith* from what He himself *once delivered*, who knew better than All the rest of the World what He required of his own *Subjects*; to direct their *Worship* by his Rule, and their whole practice by the General Law which He laid down: If They feel themselves in this disposition, They may be very certain that They are truly his *Subjects*, and Members of his *Kingdom*. Nor need They envy the Happiness of *Others*, who may think it

a much more evident Mark of their belonging to the *Kingdom of Christ*, that They have *other Law-givers*, and Judges, in *Christ's Religion*, besides *Jesus Christ*; that They have recourse not to *his own Words*, but the Words of Others who profess to interpret them; that They are ready to Submit to this *Interpretation*, let it be what it will; that They have set up to Themselves the *Idol* of an unintelligible *Authority*, both in *Belief*, and *Worship*, and *Practice*; in Words, under *Jesus Christ*, but in deed and in truth over Him; as it removes the minds of his *Subjects* from *Himself*, to Weak, and passionate Men; and as it claims the same Rule and Power in *his Kingdom*, which He himself alone can have. But,

3. This will be *Another observation*, that it evidently destroys the Rule and *Authority* of *Jesus Christ*, as *King*, to set up any Other *Authority* in *His Kingdom*, to which His Subjects are indispensably and absolutely obliged to Submit their Consciences, or their Conduct, in what is properly called Religion. There are some

Professed Christians, who contend openly for such an *Authority*, as indispensably obliges All around Them to *Unity* of Profession; that is, to Profess even what They do not, what They cannot, believe to be true. This sounds so grossly, that *Others*, who think They act a glorious part in opposing such an Enormity, are very willing, for their own sakes, to retain such an *Authority* as shall oblige Men, whatever They themselves think, though not to profess what They do not believe, yet, to forbear the *profession* and *publication* of what They do believe, let them believe it of never so great Importance.

Both these *Pretensions* are founded upon the mistaken *Notion* of the *Peace*, as well as *Authority*, of the *Kingdom*, that is the *Church*, of *Christ*. Which of them is the most insupportable to an honest and a Christian mind, I am not able to say: because They both equally found the *Authority* of the *Church* of *Christ*, upon the ruins of Sincerity and Common Honesty; and mistake *Stupidity* and *Sleep*, for *Peace*; because They would both
equally

equally have prevented *All Reformation* where it hath been, and will for ever prevent it where it is not already; and, in a word, because both equally devest *Iesus Christ* of his *Empire* in his *own Kingdom*; set the obedience of his *Subjects* loose from *Himself*; and teach them to prostitute their *Consciences* at the feet of *Others*, who have no right in such a manner to trample upon them.

The *Peace* of *Christ's Kingdom* is a manly and Reasonable *Peace*; built upon Charity, and Love, and mutual forbearance, and receiving one another, as God receives us. As for any other *Peace*; founded upon a Submission of our *Honesty*, as well as our *Understandings*; it is falsely so called. It is not the *Peace* of the *Kingdom* of *Christ*; but the *Lethargy* of it: and a *Sleep unto Death*, when his *Subjects* shall throw off their relation to *Him*; fix their subjection to *Others*; and even in Cases, where They have a right to see, and where They think They see, his Will otherwise, shall shut their Eyes and go blindfold at the Command of *Others*; because those *Others*
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are not pleas'd with their Enquiries into the Will of their great Lord and Judge.

To conclude, The *Church of Christ* is the *Kingdom of Christ*. He is *King* in his own Kingdom. He is *Sole Law-giver* to his Subjects, and *Sole Judge*, in matters relating to Salvation. His *Laws* and *Sanctions* are plainly fixed: and relate to the Favour of God; and not at all to the Rewards, or Penalties, of *this World*. All his Subjects are *equally* his Subjects; and, as such, *equally* without Authority to alter, to add to, or to *interpret*, his *Laws* so, as to claim the absolute Submission of *Others* to such *Interpretation*. And All are *His Subjects*, and in his Kingdom, who are ruled and governed by *Him*. Their *Faith* was *once* delivered by *Him*. The Conditions of their Happiness were *once* laid down by *Him*. The Nature of *God's Worship* was *once* declared by *Him*. And it is easy to judge, whether of the Two is most becoming a *Subject* of the *Kingdom of Christ*, that is, a *Member* of his *Church*; to seek all these particulars in those plain and
short

short Declarations of their *King* and *Law-giver* himself: or to hunt after Them thro' the infinite contradictions, the numberless perplexities, the endless disputes, of *Weak Men*, in several Ages, till the Enquirer himself is lost in the Labyrinth, and perhaps sits down in Despair, or Infidelity. If *Christ* be our *King*; let us shew our selves *Subjects* to *Him* alone, in the great affair of Conscience and Eternal Salvation: and, without fear of Man's judgment, live and act as becomes Those who wait for the appearance of an All-knowing and Impartial Judge; even *that King*, whose *Kingdom is not of this World*.

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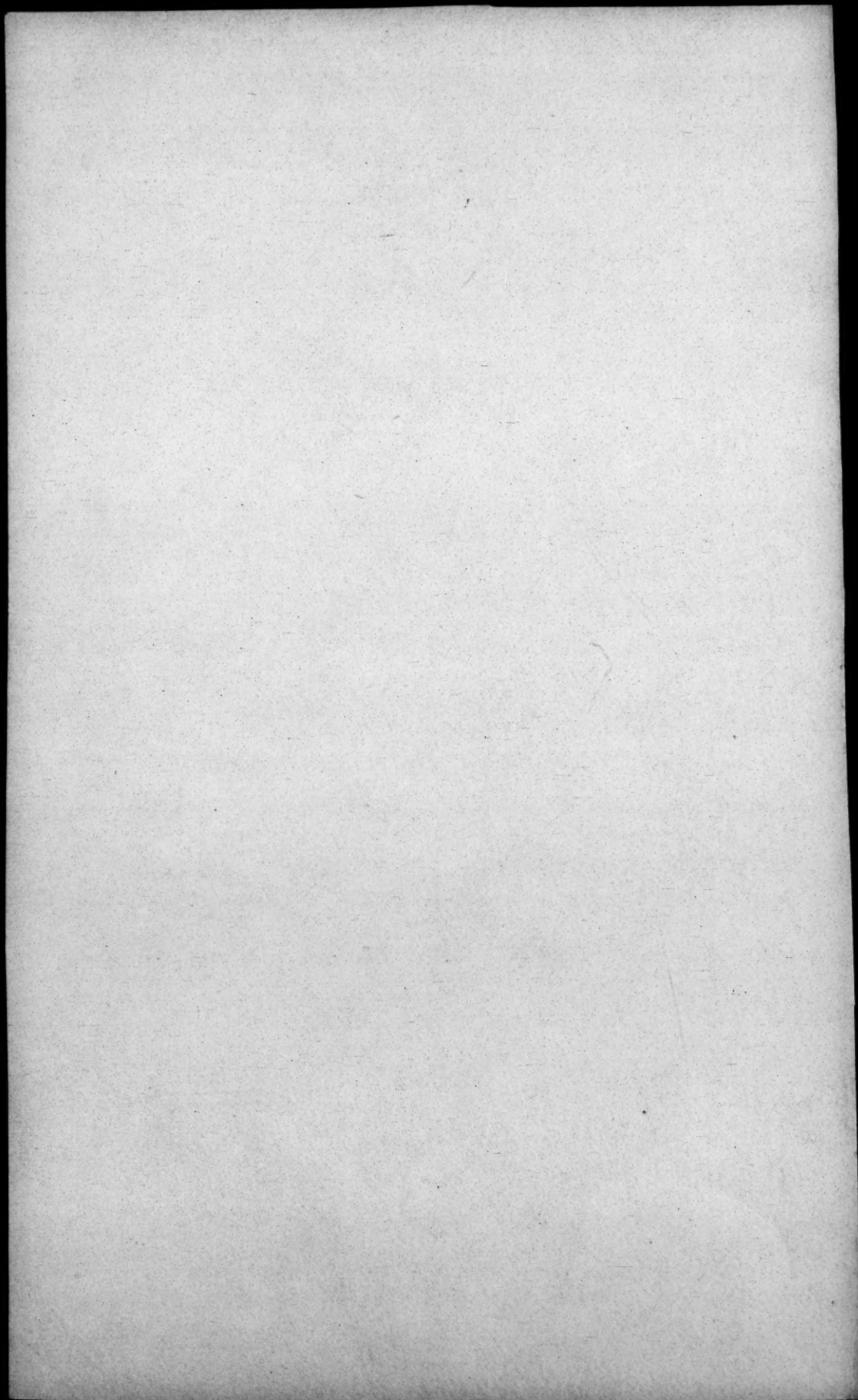
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